



NEWS RELEASE

US Dept. of Agriculture
Apache-Sitgreaves NFs
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E	Eastern Arizona Counties Organization
C	<i>Economy - Ecology</i>
O	<i>Land - People - Future</i>

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Stewardship Agreement with Eastern Arizona Counties Organization

The USFS Southwestern Region and the Eastern Arizona Counties Organization (ECO) signed a one-year stewardship agreement on September 18, 2014. This new agreement will continue the Wallow Fire restoration treatments in the burned area north of Big Lake on the Apache-Sitgreaves (A-S) National Forests. The agreement is a contracting framework that allows a partnering entity and the Forest Service to accomplish landscape scale restoration.

The agreement will allow the Forest Service and ECO to complete the forest treatments on the remaining 726 acres of the Burro project area. The first part of the Burro project area was restored under the White Mountain Stewardship Contract (WMSC) project which completed thinning of 1,500 acres prior to contract expiration in August. The new agreement will provide the contractual authority to complete the remaining 726 acres. ECO estimates the removal of approximately 17,000 tons of material, including approximately 6,500 tons of logs and approximately 10,500 tons of biomass (wood waste). The Burro project will commence in spring 2015 and be completed within 12 months.

"ECO has been interested in performing actual field restoration treatments with the A-S and the Southwestern Regional Office of the US Forest Service for some time. It is a step forward that will benefit the White Mountain area ecologically and economically. ECO and its county members, Apache, Navajo, Gila, Graham and Greenlee are committed to the continuation of landscape scale restoration in the White Mountains after the end of the WMSC and to the continued supply of restoration material to the White Mountain industry," Executive Director of ECO Pascal Berlioux said. "We welcome and strongly support the collaboration between ECO and the A-S," said Navajo County Supervisor Tenney, "We expect this project to allow the counties and the Forest Service to develop this new stewardship agreement relationship and to expand it in duration and scope over the upcoming decade and over thousands of acres in dire need of restoration. This is a true win, win opportunity. We all win when ecological restoration treatments are implemented, catastrophic fire risks are reduced, and the byproducts contribute to local economic development."

A-S Forest Supervisor Jim Zornes stated, "The A-S knows firsthand the success stewardship contracting can make on the landscape. The last 10 years the WMSC project benefitted forest health and protected surrounding communities. As an example, during the San Juan Fire, the areas at risk were saved due to the previous WMSC project, and prescribed burning and mechanical thinning conducted in partnership with Arizona Game & Fish and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Collectively, these projects allowed for a safer venue for firefighters to engage suppression efforts in a more effective manner," said Zornes.

Southwestern Regional Forester Cal Joyner stated, "This stewardship agreement establishes a framework for closer collaboration with ECO on areas of mutual economic and forest restoration interest. I am hopeful this is the start of work that will last for many years."

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